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ABSTRACT

The St. Paul Open School, funded in part under Title III of the 1965 Elementary Secondary Education Act, is a non-graded kindergarten through twelfth grade school where students progress at their own rate of speed in each area of learning. It is child-centered rather than subject-centered, with the emphasis on learning rather than teaching; on cooperation, not competition, with imaginative and flexible teachers acting as guides, counselors, and facilitators rather than lecturers, authoritarians, and examiners. Instruction and evaluation are individualized for the approximately 500 student participants. There are few, if any, "required" courses of study at any level. The basic skills are still important, of course, particularly for the younger students. A wide range of student decision-making includes a choice of adviser, teachers, classes, activities, and educational goals. Many individual and small-group activities occur rather than large groups of children doing the same thing at the same time. Students have the opportunity to interact with students of various ages and backgrounds for different activties. Outside resources such as art centers, businesses, and factories are used extensively, particularly by the older students. The design of the Open School includes three types of areas: quiet, semi-quiet, and active. There is a large resource area serving as a library. Strong involvement of parents is encouraged. (Author/JM)

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ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL

THE ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625

EVALUATION REPORT

AUGUST 1972

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH CORP.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1971-72 school year represented the first full year of operation of an educational facility of a highly innovative type, the St. Paul Open School. As an attempt to provide for greater individualization of instruction and a more humanistic climate the Open School is one example of a growing class of schools organized along more flexible lines than the traditional American school. In some cases these schools are identified by different titles and are diverse in organization, there being no single design at this point which can be referred to as the open school. But one feature is shared by most, that being a strong ideological commitment on the part of organizers, staff, and participants and at the same time an absence of systematic observations and data by which to determine whether articulated goals are achieved. However, American experimental educational and social programs have frequently attained credibility and justification by way of philosophical and political arguments rather than through the application of decision rules based on systematic observations that would "stand up in court" (see Ralph Nader's recent study by the Center for the Study of Responsive Law on the National Institute for Mental Health).

Despite the limited nature of the first year's evaluation, it is felt that more has been achieved here in the acquisition of data bearing on program goals than has been reported in the literature on open schools, open classrooms, free schools and the like to date. Largely through the efforts of Mr. Bill Cavanaugh, who coordinated most of the data collection, and Dr. Wayne Jennings, who as program Director facilitated the study, this report became possible.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION*

A. Overview

The St. Paul Open School is a non-graded, kindergarten through 12th grade school where students progress at their own rate of speed in each area of learning. It is child-centered rather than subject-centered, with the emphasis on learning rather than teaching; on cooperation, not competition, with imaginative and flexible teachers acting as guides, counselors and facilitators rather than lecturers, authoritarians and examiners.

Instruction and evaluation are individualized for the approximately 500 student participants. There are few, if any, "required" courses of study at any level. The basic skills are still important, of course, particularly for the younger students. A wide range of student decision-making includes a choice of adviser, teachers, classes, activities and educational goals. Many individual and small-group activities occur rather than large groups of children doing the same thing at the same time. Students move around freely, talk, design science, industrial arts and home economics projects, create art works, plays, stories and poems. Students have the opportunity to interact with students of various ages and backgrounds for different activities. Outside resources such as art centers, businesses and factories are used extensively, particularly by the older students.

If a student has special needs such as a foreign language, a specialized science lab or a sport not available at the school, arrangements are made to either include it in the activities of the Open School or attempt providing it through some other source.

* Major portions of this section are derived from materials written and disseminated by Open School personnel.

The design of the Open School includes 3 types of areas-quiet, semi-quiet and active. There is a large resource area serving as a library, with centers built around subject matter areas such as science, music, art, communications, etc. Strong involvement of parents is encouraged both through frequent visits with teachers and through the Open School Advisory Council.

A basic assumption behind the operation of an Open School is that learning occurs best, most rapidly, most thoroughly and most enjoyably when based on interest. The involvement of a student in a particular project or area of the school is assumed to provide a wide range of learning outcomes across many subject areas. The seven year old who bakes brownies in the home economics area is involved in reading, following directions, workmanship, making decisions, mathematics and some elementary principles of science -- all in an approach known as integrated learning. These hoped-for learning outcomes are dependent upon the skill of teachers, the interest of students in pursuing various activities, and the availability of a wide range of choices.

The teacher's role changes from that of an information giver and presenter to that of a facilitator; arranging learning experiences, clearing obstacles and barriers to learning, suggesting possibilities. In each resource area the teacher becomes an "orchestrator" of an array of people resources, materials, activities and courses. Each teacher serves in the capacity of an advisor to students in helping each student develop goals and a program to accomplish the goals.

The school provides many kinds of resource people for learning; certainly, teachers are not the only source. Thus, aides, volunteers, and community resource people come to the school to provide learning experiences for youth.

The community itself provides many learning activities. The school makes use of a nearby YMCA. Some students work as interns and volunteers in community agencies and businesses. Some courses are held in the community or in other schools in the District. The school has sent students to Mexico, India, the Badlands, and touring the U.S.A. on a camper.

Much greater emphasis is placed on affective learning outcomes. The student's self-concept is seen as fundamental to a can-do spirit, acceptance of others, and efficient learning. An examination of personal values and attitudes is encouraged in order to increase the congruence between behavior and the values of a democratic society.

The curriculum and the school goals emphasize "life skills." Skills and competencies needed to successfully cope with life are made a part of the daily life of the student. Thus, such skills are not something to be learned after graduation but are necessary to be competent in the school itself.

The school uses cross-age grouping. Older and younger students work together, learn from one another and teach one another. The presence of older students provides leadership models for younger students to study. For the older student, the responsibility and leadership opportunities to help younger students enhance feelings of importance and may consequently reduce the teen-age anti-establishment subculture.

Parents and students are involved in all basic decisions of the school. Their ideas are solicited and prized. They are listened to and the school is organized to accumulate and make use of the ideas and opinions of all.

It is apparent from several conferences on innovations in education and a conference on alternative schools in public education and from listening to the comments of several people who have been touring the nation and visiting innovative schools that the St. Paul Open School is one of the most innovative in the United States. While almost all of the practices engaged in at the St. Paul Open School exist somewhere in other schools, there are almost no examples of all of these practices within a single school. Thus, the school attempts to be a comprehensive approach to education and a significant departure from typical innovative programs.

In the history of American education curriculum approaches can be divided into two basic categories: (1) have students learn basic subject matter that has been carefully planned and sequenced with the expectation that such knowledge and the concomitant skills will produce an effective, educated person, or (2) arrange a variety of learning experiences for students in which they practice skills needed in their daily life and learn subject matter as needed to carry out projects of interest to them--again, in the hopes of producting effective, educated persons.

The Open School is fundamentally and thoroughly a category (2) approach. Mastery of a set body of knowledge is not considered the best and most productive way of achieving the goals of the program.

B. General Characteristics of an Open School

* students engaged in activities established by interest.
* imaginative, flexible teachers who serve as resource people, guides, learning facilitators, friends and counselors.

* students responsible for setting their own goals, for carrying out the work to reach those goals, and for scheduling their activities. There is guidance from teachers, with an understanding of the need for certain basic skills, especially in regard to younger children.
* a variety of individual and small-group activities.
* students learning by discovery, by doing, seeing, and sharing information.
* children able to move about freely, talk, create art work and plays, stories, music and poems.
* students intermixing with children of different ages for different activities rather than being grouped by chronological age for most activities.
* a child able to join a classroom group because it is doing, studying or discussing something of interest.
* students making use of many resources outside the school building, such as art galleries, music performances, business firms, manufacturing plants, colleges, museums, grocery stores; and talking directly to people with special talents or knowledge or experience.
* students selecting teachers and advisors from the staff because they like them and want to learn from them.
* informal activity and experience centers, large open spaces, comfortable reading areas, flexible working space, collection of equipment and materials in certain corners or spaces.
* a rich mixture of varying social, economic, racial groups from the school district.

* development of motivation toward self-discipline.
* a humanized approach to education which focuses on helping to prepare people with the skills for living.
* emphasis on the development of self-motivation, creativity, mutual acceptance, respect, responsibility and cooperation.
* parent, student and community involvement in the decision making process of the school.
* intrinsic reward resulting from attainment of goals set by students.
* no grades, but rather an ongoing evaluation of the continuing progress of the students, in consultation with teachers and parents.
* ongoing evaluation of teacher effectiveness based on the goals and philosophy of the open school.

C. Historical Sketch of Development of St. Paul Open School

In the fall of 1970 after a three-day conference on innovations in education held at Macalester College, the Coalition for Better Schools (an organization of parents, citizens and teachers dedicated to achieving quality education in St. Paul) established a committee for alternatives in education. The committee attracted great interest and became a non profit organization known as Alternatives, Inc.

The focus of Alternatives rapidly became the establishment of an open school within the St. Paul Public School system.

In the months that followed, a number of activities were initiated and committees were formed to aid in the process of reformulating an educational institution within a complex social and political system.

The titles of the original committees provide a clear picture of the kinds of concerns that were considered important by the initiators.

1. Philosophy Committee - developing goals and philosophy
2. Research Committee - gathering material and information relating to similar programs.
3. Site Committee - investigating and making recommendations regarding physical sites.
4. Volunteer Committee - coordinating the efforts of volunteers
5. Teacher Committee - surveying teacher interest in programs of this type and information dissemination
6. Publicity Committee - preparing material for media
7. Students Committee - coordinated the activities of several meetings of students for involvement in Alternatives, Inc.
8. Speakers Committee - coordinated requests for information from Alternatives, Inc.
9. Clerical Committee - handled general clerical duties
10. Legislative Advisory Committee - information dissemination to and from legislative bodies.
11. Preliminary Enrollment Survey Committee - prepared a preliminary enrollment form and tabulated the returns after distribution (see Appendix A).
12. Program Committee - planned city-wide forum and presented programs for the general membership of Alternatives, Inc.

As is clear from the above listed committees, the activities of supporters of the Open School concept were broad in scope. Following a number of public meetings and a School Board workshop, a resolution calling for an open school was passed by Alternatives, Inc. and presented before the School Board on February 16, 1971. Dr. Young, Superintendent of Schools for St. Paul, was supportive of this innovation but had not taken an active role in pressing for change, electing instead to permit Alternatives, Inc. to convince key persons of the worthiness of the project. Subsequently, the Board of Education asked the administration to study the open shcool concept and make a recommendation on establishing an Open School by Fall, 1971. Ultimately, following numerous meetings to provide administrators with information about Open Schools, the school came into being and began operating on September 8, 1971.

D. Funding of the Program Beyond State and Local Tax Levy Sources

An ESEA Title III grant was obtained involving a sum of 100,000 dollars for the first year's operation. In addition, the Hill Family Foundation provided $100,000, the St. Paul Foundation $25,000, and the Apache Foundation $1,000. Miscellaneous contributions from individuals and firms totaled approximately $15,000. The total cost of the first year's operation was $ 470,000.00.

E. Student Population

The St. Paul Open School practices modified voluntary enrollment. What this means is that an application form is provided by the schools and families indicate their willingness to have their children attend by so stating (see Appendix A). Prior to the opening of the school,

information was disseminated by public media and through public meetings making parents aware of the nature of the school and the service provided (see Appendix B for an example of the type of information disseminated).

On the basis of parent application, a list is formed and students are selected from the list with the following considerations in mind:

1. Obtaining a representative cross-section of ages
2. Providing racial and ethnic balance
3. Representing a cross- section of socio-economic statuses
4. Representing various areas within the city.

F. Deciding to Attend the Open School

As part of the evaluation, it was decided to determine who in the family was responsible for making the decision to apply for admission to the program. In 44 percent of the cases, the parent sample indicated that this was a family decision. Students themselves were responsible for the decision in 15 percent of the cases. Mothers made the decision for their child 22 percent of the times.

G. Teacher Selection

Teachers were selected for the Open School on the basis of interest, competence and educational philosophy--a distinct advantage over reassigning or retraining a traditional staff. Democratically organized, the teachers themselves make decisions on additional personnel selection, training, budget--thus increasing their understanding of these decisions and their feeling of responsibility toward making them work. They agreed with gusto to level with one another, to be open and honest, to welcome suggestions from anyone, of whatever age or expertise. Students and parents are welcome and participate in the

frequent faculty meetings. Where staff lack the skill to handle a situation or a task, they help each other--through training sessions or -more informal means. They work closely with parents and interested citizens, as well as students, on an elected Advisory Council.

H. The Advisory Council

The Open School Advisory Council is the channel for parents and community involvement in the school. The Council has limited decision-making powers, but broad advisory and consultative powers. It serves the school and its students by exploring any area that affects operation, and by bringing facts, conditions, problems and information to the attention of the staff, and if necessary to the St. Paul School Administration.

The Advisory Council is composed of 4 parents of students, enrolled in the school, including one with young children in the school; 3 at-large community members, not including any paid staff member; 4 paid staff members of the Open School, including at least one who represents the younger children; ten students currently enrolled in the Open School; the Director and one school administrator appointed by the superintendent as ex-office members (21 voting members).

The parent representatives and at-large members were chosen by the following election process: a nominating committee was appointed by the steering committee of Alternatives, Inc. The nominating committee was introduced at a general meeting of Alternatives and candidates names were placed in nomination. At a subsequent meeting, the nominating

committee presented a slate of canidates and an election was held.

After the first year, the nominating committee was appointed by the Advisory Council and candidates were elected at a Spring meeting of parents of children in the Open School.

Students and staff choose their own method of selection.

II. METHOD

The initial evaluation effort was begun in October, 1971 with the preparation of an evaluation design based on program objectives specified in the application for federal funds. Data was collected by school personnel following procedures that were mutually agreeded upon by the evaluation agency and the school. All instrumentation was submitted to the project staff for prior approval and in addition, an "educational auditor" made recommendations regarding the design and instrumentation.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 1.

To determine whether or not teachers in the Open School are sensitive to ability differences among students.

SUBJECTS: 16 contract staff, 9 aides, and 1 who could not be identified
INSTRUMENTATION: see "Staff Questionnaire", items 3,8,9, and 11 (Appendix C)
ANALYSIS: Frequency count, proportions, and content analysis

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 2.

To determine whether or not parents are satisfied with this alternative form of education.

SUBJECTS: 156 of 272 mailed questionnaires (58%) were returned by parents
INSTRUMENTATION: see "Parent Questionnaire" and instructions, (Appendix D)
ANALYSIS: Frequency counts, proportions, contingency and content analysis

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 3.

To determine whether or not administrative decisions are shared with the staff and community.

SUBJECTS: None

INSTRUMENTATION: sample of minutes from staff meetings

ANALYSIS: content

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 4.

To determine whether or not the students perceive the Open School as meeting their needs.

SUBJECTS: 217 students in gardes 4-12

INSTRUMENTATION: "St. Paul Open School Student Questionnaire", Appendix E

ANALYSIS: Frequency counts, proportions, means, SD, and inter-correlations.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 5.

To determine the academic achievement of students in the Open School.

SUBJECTS: First grade students (N=29); third grade students (N=26); fourth grade students (N=32); sixth grade students (N=31) and ninth grade students (N=31); and, entire St. Paul student population at each grade level.

INSTRUMENTATION: at the end of the academic year Metropolitan and Iowa Achievement Tests, (used throughout St. Paul as part of the official testing program) were administered by school personnel.

ANALYSIS: means, grade equivalents

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 6.

To determine the racial and SES distribution within tne student population

SUBJECTS: All enrollees
INSTRUMENTATIONS: elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey (October 1971)
ANALYSIS: descriptive, comparative

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 7.

To determine what procedures are used in selecting students for the Open School Program.

SUBJECTS: none
INSTRUMENTATION: interviews with school personnel
ANALYSIS: descriptive

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 8.

To determine whether or not parents are responding favorably to integration.

SUBJECTS: 156 of 272 parents(those who returned mailed questionnaires)
INSTRUMENTATION: see "Parent Questionnaire", lines 11 and 15, Appendix D
ANALYSIS: freguency counts, proportions

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 9.

To determine the form and functions of the advisory council.

SUBJECTS: advisory council

INSTRUMENTATION: three observations of meetings and examination of minutes

ANALYSIS: descriptive

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE 10.

To determine the degree of after-hours use of the school

SUBJECTS: none

INSTRUMENTATION: Staff records

ANALYSIS: descriptive

A. Sensitivity of staff in the Open School to ability differences among students.

Although it is assumed that an organizational structure such as the Open School might lead to greater sensitivity to individual differences because of the increased amount of input from individual students, it is difficult to assess the degree to which staff is sensitive to what can be seen or is heard. And the presence of such sensitivity without positive, overt, action of some sort on the part of teachers would not be of special interest. However, to this point no criteria have been agreed upon which would enable us to answer the question, "Is staff member _____ sensitive to student differences?" Moreover, the first year's evaluation was limited in scope and the observations implied by this kind of question would be extremely costly.

Some indirect evidence was provided by responses to the staff questionnaire (see Appendix C, items 3,8,9, and 11) It is generally agreed that in order to appreciate the full extent of individual differences some form of systematic observation, questioning, task performance analysis, or diagnostics is needed. Without this, the concept of "individual differences" remains a euphemism. As can be seen in Table [3] 15 of the 16 contract staff recognized some need for a diagnostic program, whether this be in the form of accumulating systematic base-line observations or formal aptitude appraisal. Less than half (.40) of the aides, however, saw a need for such appraisal work. There was some concern expressed that somehow if you find out what someone knows or doesn't know, can or can't do you are stigmitizing him, de-humanizing him, or in some way threatening his "being". Such expressions reflect some misunderstanding of the concept "diagnostic testing" and may be a function of the use of a technical term in the wording of the question.

Nearly all of the staff (25/26) felt that the Open School organization provided a better opportunity to learn about the interests and capabilities of students than would be possible under conventional operational procedures. Somewhat inconsistent with this nearly unanimous belief were the data attained when the staff was asked:" Do you know of any material which should be purchased that might prove helpful to a specific or small number of students?" Beneath this question was a column for the material to be listed in and a column for the student's names (see Appendix C, item 11). Although a number of materials were suggested, they were typically those kind that would appeal to a broad group, such as more playground equipment, or would further the study of a curricular area (e.g. photo-lab). In no case was a very special material identified that could be used by a particular student or small group. No students were listed as needing any supplementary material in particular. With the exception of a listening center for early reading, no self-instructional materials that might be helpful to children with learning problems were mentioned.

However, staff estimates of the proportion of students with serious learning disabilities ranged from one to 40 percent. This wide range may have been a function of the definition the respondent held for "serious learning disability." But only one staff member held that "serious learning disability"is merely a conspiratorial label and therefore examples of this cannot exist because of its unreality. Again, given this overall situation one would expect to receive some suggestions concerning remedial materials that would be appropriate to particular individuals.

Estimates of the number of children identified as showing signs of serious emotional behavior problems were also wide ranging. Two contract staff indicated they did not know what these terms meant and one refused to label people. The remainder posed estimates ranging from one to 20 percent.

B. General Views of Staff Concerning the Open School

Five questions, along with the dichotomized responses of the staff are listed in Table 3. For question number one, the entire staff maintained that more public schools should be organized like the open school. The major rationale for this was that the student population is to heterogeneous to be taught adequately through the limited number of conventional models available. More choice should be permitted. Consistent with this was the view that not all public schools should be of an open type (20/26). A parallel rationale was provided for this stating basically that not all parents could accept this form of education nor would all students profit from this. The implicit assumption here is that one can determine who can and can't handle the open setting in some reliable way prior to exposure.

Although 10 of 26 respondents saw a need for an achievement testing program, the necessity was not seen as resulting from a general need to know how students are doing in academic areas. Frequently, rejection of such testing was explained on the basis of its incompatability with the goals of the open school. Those favoring an achievement testing program did so mainly because of perceived political, establishment, "higher-up", or parental pressure. It would be accurate to say that the staff was willing to provide achievement testing for the purposes of student feed-back (on a voluntary basis) but that as a group they held strong consensus that information of this type is without professional merit.

C. Staff Views on Strengths of Open School

Table 1 Strengths of the Open School Perceived by Staff N=16 Contrast,10 Aides

Aide Responses	1.	Children's joy in being there
	2.	Allowing children to learn when ready
	3.	Not demanding conformity

4. Freedom to make mistakes and try again
5. Increased input from students
6. Creative atmosphere
7. School reflects more accurately the "real" world
8. Adaptability and energy level of personnel
9. Promotion of self-discovery

- -

Contract Staff
Responses

1. Atmosphere of acceptance and concern for people
2. Staff cohesion
3. Strong advisor-advisee relationships
4. Elimination of negative controls
5. Treating people as individuals rather than statistics
6. Existence of a sense of community
7. Maximizes student potential
8. People deal with each other as they "really" are.
9. Student serving rather than parent or teacher serving
10. Constant re-thinking occurs

D. Staff Views of Difficulties with the Open School

Table 2. Major Difficulties of the Open School Perceived by Staff (N=16 Contract, 10 aides)

Aide Responses

1. Not enough older people to lead, direct, guide
2. Staff not taking advantage of opportunities available.
3. Inability of staff to allow for true equality between students, parents, aides and volunteers

4. Rules that apply to the whole school system but are inappropriate at the open school
5. Lack of individual staff accountability
6. Too chaotic
7. Providing a safe environment
8. Getting to know all the children
9. Possibility of poor advisor-child working relationship
10. Communication of information
11. Too easy for non-aggressive students to be left to just wander around

- -

Contract Staff

Responses

1. Organization not sufficiently developed
2. More "individual" material needed
3. Isolation of staff members
4. Lack of staff experience with this kind of organization
5. Inability of alot of people to cope with what is apparently complete disorganization
6. Difficulty in keeping track of what's happening
7. Follow-through on the part of students and teachers
8. Disability to know with any precision the effects of school without long term study
9. Not following through on subject of study
10. Some students are not self-directed and want only immediate gratification
11. Lack of faith it will work
12. Too much trial and error

Table 3. Contract Staff and Aide Responses to General Questions Concerning the Program

Question	(f)	Control Staff yes	Control Staff no	Aide yes	Aide no	Total yes	Total no
1. On the basis of your experience in the open school do you feel more public schools should be organized in this fashion?		16	0	10	0	26	0
2. Would you be willing to say that all public schools should be organized in this way?		2	14	4	6	6	20
3. Have you seen any need for individual diagnostic testing as part of the school program?		15	1	4	6	19	7
4. Have you seen the need for achievement testing as part of the school program?		9	7	1	9	10	16
5. Have you found that the Open School provides staff with an opportunity to learn more about the interests and capabilities of individual students than would be possible under conventional organizational patterns?		16	0	9	1	25	1

Staff responses in Tables 1 and 2 are descriptive and self-explanatory. A major observation is that there is no strong consensus. Each individual sees different aspects as being critical, although on the "strengths" side themes of individualism, freedom, pleasure, socialization, and existentialism are focal points. Given the diversity of opinion regarding perceived difficulties it should be difficult to provide an acceptable order of priorities for future innovation. Apparently there is no single, outstanding source of grief for the staff.

E. Improving Staff Skills

Staff members were asked "What" new skill(s) would have helped you work in the school?". In Table 4 is to be found a complete listing of responses to this question (in abbreviated form). These probably represent the kinds of staff behaviors that are common in an open setting and which the staff feels represent major job parameters. Any in-service training programs might use these skills as possible training areas.

TABLE 4 . Staff Identified Skills for Improving Self-Performance

AIDES

1. Observation Skills
2. Conflict Resolution Skills
3. Establishing Rapport Quickly
4. Knowing More About How Children Learn to Read

CONTRACT STAFF

1. Organizing Own Work
2. Counselling Skills (younger children)
3. " " (small group)
4. Relating to Adolescents
5. Advising More Effectively
6. Knowledge of Different Cultures and Ethnic Groups
7. Improving Inter-personal Skills
8. Goal Setting
9. Developing Individual Study Projects

F. Parent Perceptions of the Program

1. Parent sample, occupational titles, and favorabilities toward Program Summaries.

The following information based on parent responses to the mailed questionnaire (see Appendix D) Returning the questionnaire were 156 of the initial 272 addressees for a return rate of 58 percent. Occupations of the major bread-winners were reported by 148 families and have been organized into relatively uniform categories and the actual job titles indicated by parents listed. In addition, summaries are given of the N expressing sentiments generally favorable toward the program, equivocations, and those critical.

Parents were instructed to respond to a questionnaire from the standpoint of either their oldest or youngest child in the Open School in multi-child families. These instructions were conveyed to random halves of the multi-child family enrollee list. A total of 75 respondents had only one child in the program (49 percent of the sample). Among multi-child families, 36 (24 percent) responded in terms of their oldest child while 43 (27 percent) responded in terms of their youngest. The latter is close to the original 50-50 random distribution built into the instructions and suggests that there was no systematic bias over-representing opinions regarding youngest or oldest sibling's experience.

Statistics from the school as a whole disclosed that the population distribution was 157 single and 115 multiple child enrolee families or about 57 percent single enrollee families. In contrast, the respondent sample was slightly under-representation of single enrollee families (N=75; 49 percent).

TABLE- 5 . Occupational Titles, Number Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical: Professional N=38

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Univ. Professors Or "Administration"	9	1	3
2. Medical Doctor	1	2	0
3. Engineer	4	1	2
4. Lawyer	4	1	2
5. Clergy	3	0	1
6. Architect	1	0	1
7. Other	1	0	1
Totals	23	5	10

TABLE 6 . Occupational Titles, Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical: Science and Technology N=13

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Systems Analyst	4	0	0
2. Chemist, Physicist, Med. Tech,. etc.	5		4
Totals	9		4

TABLE 7 . Occupational Titles, Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical: Teachers, Social Workers, and Psychologists N=20

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Teachers	7	1	1
2. Social Workers	5	0	1
3. Psychologists	3	1	0
4. Other related	1	0	0
Totals	16	2	2

TABLE 8 . Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical: Business, Accounting, Sales, and Manufacturing N=32

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Various Business Related	21	6	5

TABLE 9 . Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical:

Civil Service N=11

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Univ. Emp.	1		1
2. Pub. Works	1		
3. Rec. Director	1		
4. Probation	1		
5. Postal Service			2
6. City Gov.	2		1
7. Fireman	1		
Totals	7		4

TABLE 10 . Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical:

Trades N-13

Occupational Title	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Bricklayer	1		
2. Busdriver	2		
3. Machinist			1
4. Dispatcher	1		
5. Upholsterer	1		
6. Brewer	1		
7. Millwork	1		
8. Teamster	1		1
9. Printer	1		1
10. Commercial Art	1		
Totals	10		3

TABLE 11 . Occupations, Numbers Favorable toward the Open School, Equivocal, and Critical: Factory, Clerical, Unskilled, Unemployed N=21

Occupational Category	Favorable	Equivocal	Critical
1. Factory	1	1	0
2. Clerical	4	0	1
3. Unskilled Labor	2	0	0
4. Unemployed	4	1	2
Totals	16	2	3

TABLE 12 . Contingency Analysis for Occupational Categories and Program Orientation

Occupational Category	(F) Favorable	(F) Equivocal or Critical	Σ
1. Professional	23	15	38
2. Science & Tech.	9	4	13
3. Ed.,Psych., & Soc.Work	16	4	20
4. Business	21	11	32
5. Civil Service	7	4	11
6. Trades	10	3	13
7. Factory, Clerical, etc.	16	5	21
Σf	102	46	ΣΣ 148

2. Parent Response to Individual Items in questionnaire

TABLE 13 . Parent Responses to Questions Pertaining to the Functioning of the Open School N=156

ITEM CONTENT	Yes	No	No Response
1. Were you familiar with the type of program to be offered prior to your child's enrollment?	135	21	
2. Did the school keep you as well informed about your child's progress as the previous school did?	99	52	5
3. Does your child talk to you about his or her school activities?	136	20	

(cont'd Table 13)

4. Would you say your child thinks the Open School is a good experience?	144	11	1
5. Have you noticed any favorable changes in your child's behavior during the time he has attended the Open School?	120	34	2
6. Do you feel that the racial balance at the Open School is a point favoring the program?	127	17	12
7. Would you say that you are generally more satisfied with the Open School then with the previous school?	124	24	8
8. Do you think programs of this type lead to better human relations?	129	20	7

3. Frequency of Interaction Between Parent Sample and Staff

A total of 153 parents responded to this question resulting in a mean ($\bar{x}$) of 15.2 interactions with teachers. This figure is spuriously high, however, because 17 parents worked as aides or volunteers in the school and therefore were in a position to engage in freguent verbal interaction with their child's teacher. When this set of data was removed, the remaining 138 parents showed an average of 8.5 interactions with the teacher. This is still a substantial number of communications. For purposes of contrast, New York City Board of Education reports disclose that parents as a group communicate with school personnel less than four (4) times per year. The St. Paul Open School parent respondents maintained approximately one communication per month during the course of the academic year.

4. Areas of Most and Least Progress-Parent Views
Parents were asked the following questions: " In what area do you think your child has shown the most progress during the school years? and " In what area do you feel your child has shown the least progress?" The six categories in Table 14 represent the main expressions of parents.

TABLE 14 . Areas Perceived by Parents as showing most and least Progress.

Curriculum Area	Perceiving Most Progress %	Perceiving Least Progress %
1. Mathematics	08	35
2. Reading	12	23
3. English	09	23
4. Social Studies	07	21
5. Science	08	22
6. Behavior & Attitudes	53	12

These were open-ended questions. It should be noted that the Open School is not organized in a traditional fashion into set curriculum areas. (see project description). But parents still talk about schooling using a more tradional vocabulary. The category "Behavior and Attitudes" lumps together a variety of instructional objectives such as being able to make independent decisions, improved self-confidence, easier to get along with at home and numerous "affective domain" outcomes.

It is quite clear that the Open School's articulated philophical committment to affective and "learning experience" outcomes is reflected in the parents' perception that most progress was made by their children in the non-traditional curriculum areas. Over one-half (52%) expressed the sentiment that their child improved most in behavior and/or attitude. In contrast, only 12 percent saw their children as making least progress in these area. Apparently mathematics is seen as the skill in which least progress was noted.

This would be anticipated because mathematics is a seguential subject area, later learning being highly dependent on earlier learning. Much effort has gone into determining what is the best sequential set of experiences for developing, for example, the capability for doing calculus. It is unlikely that an area so systematic would be generally uncovered through self-initiated behavior. Memory, persistence, and precision are required and persistence was noted by some parents as a behavior not promoted by an Open School organization.

5. Parent's Suggestions for Improving the Open School

Parents were asked to respond to the question, "Do you have any suggestions or comments that might help us improve the Open School? If so, please elaborate. Nearly all of the parents had some comment to make and some spent considerable time formulating their responses to this item. In Appendix F appear exact replicas of parential responses which would be considered more on the favorable side. Others found in Appendix F, in contrast, are the more elaborate and penetrating on the critical side.

Table 15 provides a listing of the 10 most freguently mentioned areas perceived by parents as needing some improvement. It should be noted that some parents mentioned more than one suggestion and therefore these categories are not mutually exclusive.

A freguently mentioned general area of concern was the program's adequacy and appropriateness for very young children. Advocating a separate early learning center was based largely on the belief that because of a broad age base (K-12) often the younger children were being intimidated by the older students. Competition for resources, including advisor time, was felt to favor older students at the expense of the younger. A lack of precise behavoral and academic objectives, whether student or student-teacher formulated was felt to produce a type of random search behavior. The need was felt for a more precise formulation of goals or proficiency levels in science, math, and reading so that students and parents could guage tangible intellectual and/or behavioral growth. Approximately one-fifth of the parents expressed concerns along these lines.

Perhaps related to the perceived lack of subject matter structure was the concern that children were not "sticking to their work or courses when the going got rough." Whether the behavior was considered a function of being "unmotivated" by the subject or being personally indifferent or irresponsible, the resulting non-learning of the subject was the same.

Another complaint was over the lack of adequate follow-up. Students were scheduled for specific classes at specified times and were to have been accounted for by the teachers. Some parents felt this was not done. Children complained to parents that they went to classes, on occassion, expecting to find a teacher. None would be there. Instead, a note would be found stating that the class had been cancelled.

A set of rules governing safety in the school as well as areas designated as strictly QUIET were recommended by several parents. Some concern was also expressed for improving the student/advisor ratio so that help is immediately available when the child feels he needs it.

TABLE 15 . Summary Statements of Suggestions by Parent Sample for Improving the Open School N=156

Summary Statement	Percent Mentioning
1. More direct guidance of younger children	22
2. Precise academic and behavioral objectives for each student	21
3. More general structure	18
4. More student contact with advisors	18
5. Separate early learning center	17
6. More "depth" in areas of study	14
7. Greater emphasis on learning to persist when the task becomes difficult	11
8. Improve the safety features of the school	09
9. Increase the amount of educational materials	06
10. Less "inconsistency" including better coordination of effects of staff and volunteers	06

6. Descriptive Words Used by Parents Referring to the Program

Table 16 contains words used by parents in response to the question: "What single word do you feel would best describe the Open School Program?" Not all parents responded to this item, some left it blank, some wrote sentences, and others responded using terms that did not pertain to the program itself,e.g. a teacher, the appearance of the building, or other tangential concern. Of the respondents, about 21 percent used terms that would be considered unfavorable. This figure is nearly exactly the same as the proportion of parents judged generally favorable toward the program as reported in the occupational tables. (Tables 5 through 12).

TABLE 16 . Terms used by Parents in Describing the Open School: Favorable and unfavorable N=118

Favorable Terms	(f)	Unfavorable Terms	(f)
Freedom	4	Confused	3
Experimental	9	Groping	1
Creative	1	Uncoordinated	1
Evolving	2	Turmoil	1
Growing	1	Unmanageable	1
Opportunities	1	Insufficient	1
Humane	2	Loose	3
Great	5	Unorganized	2
Flexible	2	Insensitive	1
Trying Hard	1	Questionable	1
Self-Disciplining	1	Lacking	1
Relaxed	1	Chaotic	1
Joyful	2	Mediocre	1

(cont. Table 16)

Favorable Terms	(f)	Unfavorable Terms	(f)
Openness	2	Overstimulating	1
Stimulating	3	Wild	1
Fantastic	2	Uncertain	1
Dynamic	1	Incomplete	1
Happy	1	Frantic	1
Potential	2	Free-Wheeling	1
Exciting	5	Unfulfilling	1
Progressive	2		
Promising	4		
Caring	1		
Funky	1		
Unregimented	1		
Invigorating	1		
Self-reliance	1		
Excellent	1		
Enthusiastic	1		
Non-inhibiting	1		
Good	4		
Innovative	5		
Hopeful	1		
Permissive	1		
Evolving	1		
Unique	1		
Reaching	1		
Socially Oriented	1		
Outstanding	1		
Variety	1		
Mixed	1		

(cont. Table 16.)

Favorable Terms	(f)	Unfavorable Terms	(f)
Improving	1		
Fun	1		
Unique	1		
Daring	1		
Courageous	1		
Changing	3		
Challenging	5		

G.Academic Achievement

The summaries of achievement test results are contained in Tables 17 and 18 . It should be noted that different tests are used at various grade levels as part of the official city-wide testing program. For grades one, three, four, and six, comparisons can be made with city-wide data. At grade level nine, some nationwide comparisons can also be made.

Table 17. Mean Grade Equivalents for Academic Achievement in the Open School and System-wide (St. Paul): Grades one, three, four, and six.

Grade Level	Test	Open School Grade Equivalents $\bar{x}$	Open School N	System $\bar{x}$	System N
1	Metropolitan				
	Word Disc.	2.2	(29)	2.4	(3195)
	Word Know.	2.1	(29)	2.2	(3196)
	Read	2.1	(29)	2.2	(3189)
	Arith	2.1	(29)	2.3	(3192)
3	Metropolitan				
	Word Know.	4.6	(26)	4.1	(3384)
	Read	4.6	(26)	4.0	(3381)

Table 17. (cont'd)

Grade Level	Test	Open School Grade Equivalents $\bar{x}$	Open School N	System $\bar{x}$	System N
4	Tests of Basic Skills				
	Vocab.	5.3	(32)	4.5	not available
	Read	5.1	(32)	4.5	-
	Arith. Concept	4.7	(32)	4.6	-
	Arith. Prob.	4.0	(32)	4.5	-
	Arith. Total	4.4	(32)	4.6	-
6	Tests of Basic Skills				
	Vocab.	7.0	(31)	6.4	-
	Read	6.8	(31)	6.3	-
	Arith. Concept	6.5	(31)	6.2	-
	Arith. Prob.	6.2	(31)	6.1	-
	Arith. Total	6.3	(31)	6.2	-

What would be considered elementary level performance figures suggest that academic achievement in the Open School is comparable with the average performance level within the entire St. Paul system. It should be noted that the project has been operating for only one year. This means that a smaller portion of achievement is attributable to the Open School in the case of older children than is true for younger children. In other words, what appear to be advantages for the Open School students at grades three, four and six may be a function of previous learning. A second year's data will provide more telling evidence on the effects of Open education.

Table 18. Raw and Standard Academic Achievement Scores for the Open School and System-Wide (St.Paul): Grade Nine

Test	Open School		System-Wide	
	Raw $\bar{x}$	Standard $\bar{x}$	Raw $\bar{x}$	Standard $\bar{x}$
Iowa Tests of Educational Development				
Read. Comp.	27	15	23	13
Read. Vocab.	21	16	16	14
Lang. Usage	28	17	22	14
Spell	19	15	14	12
Math	12	13	11	12

Ninth grades in the Open School show academic performance levels above the city average. In terms of nation-wide data, Open School students perform among the nation's upper third in reading comprehension, upper half in reading vocabulary, upper quarter in language usage, upper third in spelling, and upper third in math.

H. Socio-Economic Status and Racial Distribution in the Open School

Data on the racial distribution of students in the Open School were obtained from the October 1971 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey as required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The proportion of students receiving free lunch was used as an index of the representation of lower SES students in the population.

Table 19 . Racial-Ethnic Distribution in the St. Paul Open School Compared with System-Wide Statistics, Grades K - 12, October 1, 1971.

Racial-Ethnic Group	f Open School	%	f System-Wide	%
American Indian	12	.025	537	.011
Afro-American	35	.073	3170	.066
Oriental	1	.002	104	.002
Spanish Surnamed	4	.008	1569	.033
Total		.109		.112

Summaries in Table 19 show that the distribution of major racial-ethnic minorities in the Open School is an accurate reflection of the composition of the entire St. Paul school population. October reports disclosed that 244 (51%) of the student body was transported to school at public expense and approximately 17 percent were receiving free lunch.* These proportions support the contention that the student population of the Open School is a representative cross-section of the general St. Paul student population.

K. Parental Responses to Racial Integration

Eighty-one (81) percent of the parent sample indicated that they felt that the racial balance at the Open School was a point favoring the program. Eleven (11) percent felt that this was not true and eight (8) percent did not respond (see Table 13).

I. The Advisory Council

Dr. Richard Weatherman, representing Teaching and Learning Research Corp. attended sessions of the Advisory Council in November, January, and April. Minutes of all meetings were kept and a representative sample was taken for purposes of analysis.

On the basis of direct observation, it was noted that representation of various interest groups had been provided for. It was felt that in April there was more of a tendency for adult control and discussion of topics than had been displayed earlier. A student

* The school system provides free bussing for K-6 students 1 mile or more from school regardless of income needs.

member had complained that the parents really didn't know the teachers well enough, but this was not followed up. A student also presented a statement written by another criticizing the inability of the Advisory Council to solve problems. An examination of minutes also disclosed a relatively small proportion of discussion being devoted to student initiated concerns. At the same time, a large amount of time was given to the question of School policies.

In general, however, it can be stated that the structure and functioning of the Advisory Council was compatible with the philosophy of the Open School and the description of it found in the program proposal.

J. After-Hours use of the School Building

The after hours use of the school building involved a variety of activities. A local business group used the athletic area to play volleyball for two weeks. Four days during the school year educational conferences were held in the building. A one semester course in auto mechanics for women was taught in the building evenings. Twelve charrettes, highly intense brainstorming sessions utilizing both theoretically and practically experienced professionals within the metropolitan community to assist each area in the school to develop new and innovative ideas and resources for subject matter, were held throughout the year during the evening hours. Parent forums were held regularly to involve parents to have input into the planning and development of the school program and plant. In general, by January, the after hours use of the building had increased to the point where it became necessary to obtain a permit from downtown to allow the building to remain open from five to eleven p.m. Monday through Friday.

K. Student Perceptions of the Open School

For the 217 members of the student sample an incomplete response rate of .13 was observed. In other words thirteen percent of the respondents left one or more items blank on their questionnaire. Although this rate is rather typical for questionnaire surveys, further analysis was conducted to determine whether any biasing effect was evident. To do this, each respondent was assigned a dichotomous (1,0) vector score; one if he responded to all items, zero if he did not. Subsequently, point biserial correlations (r_{pb}) were calculated between the missing data vector and each of the items. An analysis of this type permits us to answer questions of the following forms:

1. Is there a mean difference between the measurable results of the two subgroups of the dichotomy?
2. Is there any correlation between the dichotomized attribute and the measurable?
3. Are either of these differences statistically "significant".

All point biserial correlations were extremely low in absolute value, ranging from .01 to .16. What this tells us is that the means per item for both complete data and incomplete data respondents were very similar, arguing against any notion of internal biases in the data due to this cause.

A direct examination of the means and standard deviations in Table 20 discloses that generally the responses given by students would be considered favorable. One should note at the outset, however, that these are merely descriptive summaries and in no sense can be directly attributed to the intervention in a cause and effect sense. It is possible, however, to determine to what degree students in the Open School evidence (articulate) stances toward learning, school, and others that are compatible with the educational objectives and philosophy of the program..

In general, the following type of orientations are most generally articulated by the students as part of their repertoire:

1. Feeling positive about attacking new problems and applying new ideas (items 1,19, and 20).
2. Having a fairly clear picture of one's own capabilities and knowing when to seek aid (items 4, and 7).
3. "Following through" on tasks or personal obligations (items 13,15 and 17).
4. Willingness to "relate" to people who are different (item 8).

Lower levels of desirability among student responses were associated with the following areas.

1. Being relatively immune to social pressure as far as one's own ideas are concerned (items 12 and 21).
2. Knowing how to handle problems that are faced (item 6).

It should be noted, however, that all items elicited group responses (means) that were more toward the favorable side. However, the standard deviations are rather wide considering the responses are scored on a five point basis. For example, item 24 yielded a mean of 3.24 with a SD of .91. This means that approximately 68 percent of the population scored between 2.33 (moderately unfavorable) and 4.15 (highly favorable). Standard deviations are typically close to 9/10 of a scale interval suggesting rather strong heterogeneity of views among the students in the Open School.

Some evidence of the validity of the items can be generated by inter-correlating the entire set of 23 items. Items which are similar in content area should elicit similar responses and should therefore display higher correlations than those items assessing presumably disparate areas. For example item 15 states "when I give myself a task to do I usually finish it". Item 17 is written "when I begin a task I feel that I can finish it". As should be the case if students are responding thoughtfully rather than randomly, the

correlation between responses to these items was substantial (r=.54). Other examples are (item 19) "I like to try out a lot of my new ideas" and (item 1) "I like to learn how to do new things", r=.33. "If something puzzles or confuses me, I ask questions" (item 7) and "I know when to get other people's advice about something that is troubling me". (item 23), r=.34. "I know what I am good at and what I am not good at" (item 4) and "I feel good about myself even though some people don't like me". (item 18), r=.39.

Except in those cases where item content is relatively similar, item intercorrelations were low. This is as would be expected if items were assessing independent ideas or attributes.

Table 20 . Means and Standard Deviations of Responses to St.Paul Open School Questionnaire. N=217

Score Range: 5=desirable 1= undesirable

Item	$\bar{X}$	SD
1. I like to learn how to do new things	3.82	.83
2. I usually try to learn new things on my own	3.39	.84
3. I feel good about myself	3.49	.90
4. I know what I am good at and what I am not good at	3.79	.92
5. If I need to find out something I usually know where to look	3.42	.90
6. When I am faced with a problem I know how to handle it	3.24	.74
7. If something puzzles or confuses me, I ask questions	3.80	1.00
8. When I meet people who are different than me,I don't like them	4.05	.89
9. My answers to problems are usually not very unusual	3.31	.84
10. I think that my ideas are as good as anyone else's	3.52	.96
11. When someone disagrees with me I find it very difficult to accept his point of view	3.28	.98
12, Before I take a stand on an issue, I find out how my friends feel about it.	3.12	1.07
13. When I promise to do something I keep my promise	3.60	.81
14. I need people to push me before I finish things I start	3.43	.98
15. When I give myself a task to do I usually finish it	3.73	.73
16. When I meet someone with a problem I usually try to help them	3.57	.92

Table 20. Means and Standard Deviations of Responses to St. Paul Open School Questionnaire. N=217 (cont'd.)

Score Range: 5=desirable 1=undesirable

	Item	$\bar{X}$	SD
17.	When I begin a task I feel that I can finish it	3.85	.79
18.	I feel good about myself even though some people don't like me	3.58	.98
19.	I like to try out a lot of my new ideas	3.66	.91
20.	I like to think things that nobody else thinks about	3.64	.99
21.	I rely on my opinion even if it conflicts with others	3.24	.91
22.	I feel capable of solving my own problems	3.48	.83
23.	I know when to get other people's advice about something that is troubling me	3.58	.97

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY ENROLLMENT FORM

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY ENROLLMENT FORM

Dear Parents:

Enclosed is an application form for the St. Paul Open School. Be sure to include only those children who will attend the Open School if accepted. The enclosed form is preliminary to final acceptance in the school. All applicants will be placed on a waiting list pending vacancies or expansion of the program. Since the school was planned for a student population of 500, enrollment is limited. One of the goals of the school is to reflect the diversity of the city—racially, socio-economically and educationally. Efforts will also be made to insure a balance of elementary and secondary students and male and female students.

Please note the comment on transportation on the application form. Also, there will be a noon lunch program.

Only applicants who have completed the enclosed form will be considered for enrollment in the Open School.

8-16-71

St. Paul Public Schools

St. Paul Open School
1885 University Ave.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

ENROLLMENT FORM

Please Print

Parent's Name: _____ _____ _____
Last First Middle

Address: _____ Zip _____
Number, Street, Apartment number

Telephone: _____

List only those students to be enrolled during 1972-73 school year:

Name	Sex	Date of Birth	Age	Grade Level 9-1-71	School attended 1971-72*	School to be attended**

* If student attended a private or parochial school last year, also write in and circle the name of the public school he could have attended.

**If not accepted for the Open School. Needed for geographical sorting.

Comments (Special needs you want the school to be aware of): _____

_____

____ Transportation is provided for kindergarten through grade 6 students living over a mile from the school. If you could not afford the transportation expense or make other arrangements for your grade [illegible] students please check. Inability to provide transportation does not affect selection of students.

It is my wish to have the above named students considered for enrollment in the Open School.

_____
Parent or Guardian Signature

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF OPEN SCHOOL INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF OPEN SCHOOL INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

On September 8 a new school will open in St. Paul, Minnesota.

It will be a public school, but it will be like nothing seen before in the Twin Cities and seldom, if ever, in any other city.

It's called the Open School and it will have

* 500 students, all ages, 5 through 18
* Voluntary, city-wide enrollment
* Voluntary desegregation and transport to a distant site (for most)
* No grades---first, second, third, etc.
* No grades---A, B, C, etc.
* Not much of a facility: a four-floor office building on an industrial thoroughfare, most recently used by Univac technical writers and computer repairmen
* Little equipment, few furnishings, few desks, hardly any textbooks
* Federal funds, state funds, district funds, foundation support, private donations---and a much-too-small budget
* A director who helped found a school for dropouts in the St. Paul public school system; a program coordinator with a Beatles accent who is a friend of John Holt
* 17 certified teachers; numerous interns, student teachers, paraprofessionals; and seemingly thousands of volunteers for a pupil-adult ratio of about 3-1
* The most enthusiastic body of parents in the world.

But none of these is the most amazing thing about the school. The most amazing thing is that it's going to open at all.

More than anyone, that amazes the 40-year-old director, Wayne Jennings, who has been a part of the St. Paul public schools for years and who, along with everyone else in the system, upon hearing last fall that an open school was the goal of a new citizens' group, shook his head and said it couldn't be done.

(MORE)

OPEN SCHOOL

Full credit for the school's creation goes to the citizens' group, called Alternatives, Inc.

Its nine-month struggle (October to July) took place in a tradition-minded, heavily Catholic city of 310,000 where half the school-age children attend private schools, most of them parochial. Alternatives' story is one of group dynamics: a struggle for a bit of power by a group of frustrated parents and others, the self-education of the group, the ability of members to work out details and compromise with one another on goals but, having decided on those goals, unwillingness to accept anything less from the school system.

It's also the story of 30 to 40 individuals who, at various times, served on the steering committee and learned how to bury differences of opinion and personality conflicts to work toward their goal; who contributed special strengths at needed times; and who put in never-ending hours of meetings, phone calls, writing, planning, conversations, brain-storming sessions, and more meetings.

They never faced a true open fight. But there was always, constantly coming from new directions, opposition to be dealt with.

It came from long-time PTA ladies, who didn't like the group's proposed Advisory Council for community input or perhaps its de-emphasis on discipline and who, with others, seized on the economic argument that the system could not afford "frills" and experiments.

It came from elements of the black community who felt the money could better be used to add classrooms to inner-city schools, or who said the freedom would be bad for black students needing tight discipline and traditional training.

It came even from supportive parents whose children, at the last moment, were not accepted in the school because 800 children had applied for 500 spaces, and who cried elitism and special privilege.

(MORE)

OPEN SCHOOL

But it came in the most difficult forms from certain entrenched school-system central administrators and principals, who could not easily accept the group's implied and stated criticism of today's public schools. They not only had philosophical differences with the group but also the devastating argument that one who "faced reality" would see that the job "could not be done" in so little time.

Significantly, it did not come from St. Paul's new superintendent of schools, Dr. George Young, who began preaching new approaches to education as soon as he arrived, in June of 1970. (Dr. Young, however, did not push for the school, adopting the strategy of letting Alternatives convince everyone whose backing they needed.) Another real help was a dynamic new School Board member, George Latimer, who was actively supportive all the way.

And how do the administrators feel now that the school is a reality? "They are very pleased," says Jennings. "They are all being very supportive."

The story is one without heroes....or one in which the group is the hero. Whatever needed to be done was assigned to whoever could do it. Volunteers sprang up like magic to take on seemingly impossible tasks....like trying to call every teacher in St. Paul to invite them all to an informational forum---which filled a 600-seat auditorium on a blizzardy January Friday night, and was the first real show of a strength by the fledgling group to make the school people sit up and take notice.

Or like heading a volunteer committee which gets volunteers to do everything under the sun. Volunteers are working in the school building to get it ready for use; volunteers are trying to round up furnishings, equipment, books, carpeting and even truck delivery service; volunteers have signed up to donate 14 hours of time in the school for every single school hour during the coming year---so far.

What the school people saw, finally, was a large and growing group of parents and others (more than 2,000 names are on the Alternatives mailing list) intensely concerned about the quality of education in St. Paul, and willing to put enormous

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amounts of time and energy into coming up not only with criticism but with a well-thought-out constructive proposal for change; not only with requests for money, but with a Title III proposal that was granted $100,000 and a Hill Foundation proposal that brought in another $100,000; not only with middle-class "liberal" values but with blacks and poor people involved in the planning and minority enrollment built into the plan.

(The school has about 60 minority persons enrolled, or well above the city's tiny percentage of minority population. Around 20 per cent of the students are from poor families.)

What attracted all these people? Why did they go so far as to sign up their children for an unknown, untried school, after starting out with little in common but dissatisfaction?

They pooled knowledge of educational philosophy, innovative practices all around the country, stories of successes and mistakes. Many visited a K-12 open school 80 miles south, in Mankato, Minn., whose director had challenged them way back in October to "do it" themselves. They read about the new-style teacher training going on in North Dakota, of all places.

They read Kohl and Holt and Featherstone, and most of all they read Silberman's "Crisis in the Classroom." (Dr. Young may be the only superintendent in the country to pass out copies of "Crisis" to every principal and major administrator in his system.)

Finally, they designed the school they wanted for their children.. It includes commonly expressed goals: individual learning, humane education, a child-centered rather than subject-centered school, capitalizing on students' interest, progress at their own rate, development of their ability to self-start, self-direct and self-motivate.

It includes democracy in action. Teachers, who are beginning to think of themselves as "facilitators," were chosen for their attitudes about kids and education, their flexibility and willingness to innovate and change, their ability to work cooperatively and democratically with others, and their own personal life-style. "We wanted alive, active people who lead interesting lives on their own," said Jennings.

It includes an elected Advisory Council representing parents, teachers, students, and community members, whose function it will be to bring problems to the attention of everyone, and to work on solutions.

It includes total openness and flexibility with regard to subject matter, schedules, classes, all forms of study. Resources in the city will be used (two community resource specialists are already lining them up). A smorgasbord of possible topics for study will be presented to the students in the first weeks, to which they will add their own ideas. They will be encouraged to formulate their own educational goals and then figure out how to achieve them, with the help of a personally selected adviser.

It includes lots more, of course. But it includes more questions than answers at this point. And of course everything that's being planned in advance may change in the first week or month or year, once the students get in there.

But Wayne Jennings summed up everyone's hopes rather succinctly when asked what he thinks is the most exciting aspect of the Open School:

"The idea that school is exciting."

##

APPENDIX C

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL

APPENDIX C

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE
ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL

CONTRACT STAFF_____

AIDE_____

During the past year you have been employed in a rather unique educational setting. Because of the innovative nature of the Open School Program it is necessary to obtain information pertaining to the organization, functioning, and outcomes of the program. Staff are a valuable source of information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of programs because of the frequency of their direct contact with children that are engaged in learning. Carefully considered responses to the following questions will be appreciated since this information will have bearing on furure directions and general planning.

1. On the basis of your experiences with students in the Open School Program, do you feel that more public schools should be organized in this fashion?

2. Would you be willing to say that all public schools should be organized in this way? If no, why not?

3. Have you seen any need for individual diagnostic testing as part of the school program? Why or why not?

4. Have you seen the need for achievement testing as a part of the school program?

5. Have you found that the Open School provides staff with an opportunity to learn more about the interests and capabilities of individual students than would be possible under conventional organizational patterns? Why, or why not?

6. What do you consider to be the major strength of the Open School? Please describe this briefly.

7. Please describe what you consider the major difficulty with this type of school organization.

8. Have you identified any children in the school who you think may have serious learning disabilities? About what proportion of the student body do you think these children would represent?

St. Paul Open School Staff Q.

9. Have you identified any children in the school who show signs of serious emotional or behavorial problems? About what proportion of the student body do you think these children would represent?

10. What new skill(s) would have helped you to work in the school?

11. Do you know of any materials which should be purchased that might prove helpful to a specific or small number of students?

MATERIAL	STUDENT

APPENDIX D

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE AND INSTRUCTIONS

APPENDIX D

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE AND INSTRUCTIONS

St. Paul Open School
1885 University Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

May 19, 1972

Dear Parents,

Within a few days you will receive a parent questionnaire designed to help us assess the educational program at the St. Paul Open School. Part of our school financing comes from federal funding which requires us to carefully evaluate our program. Your carefully considered responses and prompt return of the questionnaire will help us obtain future federal funding and assist us in program planning over the summer.

The questionnaire consists of 18 questions and should not require more than fifteen minutes of your time to complete.

Questionnaires will be mailed to three groups of parents:

1. *Every family which has only one child enrolled in the Open School will receive a questionnaire.*

2. *One half of the families with more than one child enrolled in the Open School will receive a questionnaire to be answered concerning the youngest child in the family enrolled at the Open School.*

3. *The other half of the families with more than one child enrolled in the Open School will receive a questionnaire to be answered concerning the oldest child in the family enrolled at the Open School.*

If you have any questions please call me.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Cavanaugh

Bill Cavanaugh
Counselor
647-0186

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

Because the Open School is unique as an educational arrangement, it is necessary to evaluate its impact in a number of areas. Parent perceptions concerning the program are important sources of informtion. We appreciate your cooperation in answering the questions which follow. Your responses will be considered confidential.

Please indicate the ages of all children in your family enrolled in the Open School._____

If you have more than one child enrolled in the Open School, please answer the questions from the standpoint of:

_____Your oldest child in the Open School
_____Your youngest child in the Open School

1. For how many months has your child attended the Open School? _____
2. Were you familiar with the type of program to be offered prior to your child's enrollment? _____
3. Do you feel that the school has kept you as well informed about your child' progress as the previous school did? _____
4. How many times during the school year have you talked with staff members from the Open School? _____
5. Have you visited the Open School this year? _____
6. How many times? _____
7. Does your child talk to you about his or her school activities? _____
8. Would you say that your child thinks the Open School is a good experience? _____
9. Have you noticed any favorable changes in your child's behavior during the time that he has attended the Open School? _____
10. What single word do you feel would best describe the Open School Program? _____
11. Do you feel that the racial balance at the Open School is a point favoring the program? _____
12. Would you say that you are generally more satisfied with the Open School' than with the previous school? _____

13. In what area do you think your child has shown the most progress during the school year? _____

14. In what area do you feel your child has shown the least progress? _____
_____

15. On the basis of what you know about your child's school experience this year, do you think programs of this type lead to better human relations? _____

16. The decision to attend the Open School was made by _____ child _____ mother _____ father _____ all

17. Please indicate the occupation of the major breadwinner in your family. _____
_____

18. Do you have any suggestions or comments that might help us improve the Open School? If so, please elaborate.

APPENDIX E

ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX E

ST. PAUL OPEN SCHOOL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

For the following set of statements we would like you to rate how much they apply to you. Use the following scale to indicate how much these statements seem to apply to you.

Rate 1 - if it is always like you
2 - if it is very much like you
3 - if it is sometimes like you
4 - if it is not very much like you
5 - if it is never like you

For example, for the item, "Getting to school on time," if you always seem to get to school on time you would rate yourself 1, and if you are always late, you would rate yourself 5, because it is never like you to get to school on time.

A. I like to learn how to do new things.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

B. I usually try to learn new things on my own.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

C. I feel good about myself.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

D. I know what I am good at and what I am not good at.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

E. If I need to find out about something I usually know where to look.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

F. When I am faced with a problem I know how to handle it.

1. _____ Always 2. _____ Very much 3. _____ Sometimes 4. _____ Not very much 5. _____ Never

G. If something puzzles or confuses me, I ask questions.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

H. When I meet people who are different from me I don't like them.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

I. My answers to problems are usually not very unusual.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

J. I think that my ideas are as good as anyone else's.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

K. When someone disagrees with me, I find it very difficult to accept his point of view

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

L. Before I take a stand on an issue, I find how my friends feel about it.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

M. When I promise to <u>do</u> something I keep my promise.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

N. I need people to push me before I finish things I start.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

O. When I give myself a task to do, I can usually finish it.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

P. When I meet someone with a problem I usually try to help them.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

Q. When I begin a task I feel that I can finish it.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

R. I feel good about myself even though some people don't like me.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

S. I like to try out a lot of my new ideas.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

T. I like to think things that nobody else thinks about.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

U. I rely on my opinion even if it conflicts with others.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

V. I feel capable of solving my own problems.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

W. I know when to get other people's advice about something that is troubling me.

1._____ Always 2._____ Very much 3._____ Sometimes 4._____ Not very much 5._____ Never

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE OF MORE COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS
AND OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS MADE BY INDIVIDUAL PARENTS.

This year it did not seem as feasible or perhaps even desirable, but we hope more individual followthrough will occur in reading and math areas especially for our younger children. We feel this should be done with the child and an individual in that area so the child has a better idea of where he is going and if and when he is making progress.

We hope a real in-depth look is made of the situation faced by 5 year olds. Our 5 year old was aided by many - students, siblings, adults;and he thrived, we feel from the totalness and all day experiences. However, the physical plant size and his ability to maneuver, made it not possible for him to do some of the things he had hoped to do.

We think Open School has been the most exciting, encompassing and relevant program any of our three children have met in all of their previous school interest or project experiences. Their and our ability to relate to, and be aware of others has been increased so much. We appreciate the open-ness, the opportunity for input - as students and parents.

We are generally satisfied with the Open School's first year of operation with compassion for all that a first year must deal with.

However, we are seriously concerned that the depth and scope of the program must be developed to an extent far more reaching than was attempted in the first year. In this area we are speaking to our concerns for all of our children.

As for our youngest child, he feels that he has not learned anything much-certainly not as much as he would have in his 'old' school. He has talked about returning to his old school, but he doesn't want to do that. He wants to learn at the Open School.

The school program has forced young children, particularly, to make decisions for which they do not have the experience. Decision making must be a process, not thrust upon a child, nor denied him. The early elementary areas must meet the needs of these children. It would be simple, since we all know how, to return to the old ways to meet these needs. This I am not advocating. Perrone pointed out when he was here that he saw the young children segmented; that they had to go long distances to get the things of learning that they need. And I would suggest that in the process, they are often sidetracked and they forget what they are about.

I would suggest a possible solution involving physical space. This would entail opening up the area from the early learning center northerly through the library to the north wall of the building. (We must not be afraid to knock out a wall that we may want back later for that reason-it can be built again or better positioned). This would allow for no devision between the play area and the basic skill area, where much learning material would be available, and the transition between the two would be easy, accessible and logical. I would be hesitant to send a kindergarden child to the school as it is now. During the first year, everyone was in the same boat and got through in some fashion. I think that if we continue in that fashion we are failing to facilitate learning for the younger child.

I also believe that serious consideration should be given to homogeneous advisory groupings while at the same time allowing for choices of advisors by students. When students come from all over the city, they ought to be provided the opportunity to get to know and be friends with those of their similar age without having to work like dogs to do so. Our failure to accomodate these needs of children is not what one would call humane. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the advisory meetings have been less than satisfactory.

Finally, We must not be afraid to make changes, and we must be willing to risk making mistakes in order to make this school what we hope and believe it can be.

1. School is too noisy - needs a lot of quiet areas for concentration.

2. Kids should be separated by age or maturity groups - Too much chaos as is.

3. Entire school needs revamping in discipline area - Life consists a great deal more of doing things that are necessary than of things that are pleasant - and if kids don't learn to do the necessary things in school, where are they going to learn them? I think this is the real crux of the entire Open School concept and if it isn't corrected by some method, it can only fail as a new educational system.

I feel that there wasn't enough attention given to individual students - the advisors didn't seem to know where their advisees were - even if they (the student) had filled out his schedule - the advisor didn't follow through to see if the student had attended his classes - Many times I went over to school to pick up my child - and he was wandering around outside - at a loss as to what to do. He felt no one was interested in him - he asked questions of aides, teachers, etc.- and no one seemed to know what was going on - as to where certain classes were, etc. I also feel that there wasn't enough things geared for the 10 and 11 year old groups. My child feels himself that he hasn't accomplished much this past year - but still wants to give it a try for the coming school year. I do think a little more rigid system for the younger students should be worked out.

1. Need more materials - more individual and self-directed learning aids in resource areas

2. Each advisor needs to have less advisees - needs to seek out more specific information. Use that information in cooperation with parent and child to work out individual program and agreed upon Responsibilities and goals - Clearly Delineated Goals for each child. All need them to through consistently in determining daily if child is moving toward those Goals.

It is a rare person who has become completely responsible and self-determined - We must establish clear, and agreed-upon methods to help each child learn this skill - Most parents of reasonable experience (older children) understand that responsibility, self-discipline, ability to choose best course for oneself in the long run must be deliberately taught and arranged-Only expecting responsibility is not enough - Child must experience consequences of irresponsible choices - Consistently, immediately.

3. A suitable program must be arranged for each child-To insure this happens for them - Daily.

4. Each child should have rules of school - Expectations of his behavior clearly defined and agree to meet these expectations before being accepted for enrollment.

Give more parental supervision, assistance, discussion of opportunities with the students. After that, communicate with the advisor for my children about opportunities, programming, supervision during school hours to check that objectives are being worked on approximately per Plan.

This recognizes that you could never employ enough staff to provide sufficient supervision and counsel to take full advantage of such a wide opportunity. Thus, this responsibility must fall primarily on the student and parents, who have the most at stake and can reap the greatest benefit as well as have the most responsibility for the student's achievement.

Perhaps the course selection plan (or schedule of choices sheet) should show the choices made; be counter-signed weekly by both student and parent and turned in to the advisor by mail (lest loss occur). Periodically (following week or bi-weekly) the same sheet could get some objective marking of achievement in meeting this schedule, noted by the advisor, and a subjective remark or two on progress or points warranting attention and the same sheet mailed back home in labelled envelopes (perhaps parents could provide stamped return envelopes when they send in their schedule).

In total, there is need for more communication on student objectives and plan to both parents and advisor, with some type of objective report by the advisor back re whether objectives are being met, at least in broad sense.

Perhaps the paper work might get too much and some reply by phone from advisor to parent could substitute. But I'm not sure the advisors know what the student objectives really are in short term sense. Thus not enough incentive or pressure is present to compel student to do what he should.

We feel our son should spend part of the day with his own peer group. He seems to have the impression that he doesn't have to follow through anything he starts. We feel that he should learn that things have to be finished and classes should be tried more than once.

We also feel that he doesn't seem to have enough contact with different teachers. There just isn't enough emphasis stressed to the younger children that certain classes would be interesting to them.

I feel that more direction, guidance, and perhaps even segregation should be provided for children ages 5-10. At this age they are not ready to design their own activities entirely on their own and need the added support of teachers to encourage them in constructive educational directions. Also, there is a tendency for younger children to feel intimadated by older children, and, as in our case, resulting in reluctance to approach many classes because of it. Segregation of children by age level for certain academic classes would help younger children feel more free to attend classes.

There needs to be more follow-through on the part of both student and teacher with each subject taken. A student should be committed for a period of time to a class and should, in turn, be able to expect the advisor teacher to show up - and on time! Our children have looked forward to a specific class or meeting, only to be highly disappointed when it was cancelled, without any notice. This in turn leads to an unfilled time where they have to look for something else to do. The lack of classes and encouragement on the part of the adult is especially hard on the younger child.

The Open School has offered many stimulating and exciting experiences but these must be weighed against the deep hurts that also have been felt because of the lonliness and the inability to open that closed door!

An attempt must be made to bring in the shy child from the outer edges of the group. I realize the situation could be improved by the addition of more advisors, aides, etc., and that the financial situation prevents this. The school has helped our oldest child to grow and develop; and the experience has been great. Our youngest is unhappy, and on the outside of the group, perhaps this would have happened anyway.

We do believe in the concept of the Open School, and very much want it to work! It has been a hard year for all concerned, and after a good summer, the next year should be easier.

The conduct of such programs of experimentation and research need not be done by our educational system in order to find improvements and new methodolgies. Your professional journals and conference proceedings are full of reports on such programs. Utilize the experience of others. This is especially true when the ability and willingness of the constituency to support even the basic elements (e.g. building programs) are showing signs of strain and discontent. I'm afraid that more students will be harmed (in their long-term intellectual formation) than helped in the period during which all the bugs are being worked out of such a system. To what end? - to find out that 2% of a student population distribution can function in or benefit from such an envoirnment.

Given that the district can afford to support any special programs at all, I'd rather see the resources invested in the program for slow learners, retarded, etc. The other cats have enough natural talent to fend for themselves.

My concern is hostility and violence. Perhaps early in the year the staff could identify that small percentage of students whose response is to lash out, and they could be worked with or dismissed.

I have observed, and our daughter has been the victim, of frightening intimidation. This means her final month this spring has been hell; and it bothers me to know how ponderously the wheels turned to protect (physically) an individual child.

I would be glad to discuss this over the summer.

We must make learning even more exciting - basic skills must be brought into the program. Some of the staff must be more responsible with their time in relationship with the student. It has been a great year, but we do have a long way to go before we can say we have been successful in educating the total child. The lost child is a great worry!

But, again I say, Thank God for the Open School - Our boys had a marvelous year.

None of my children want to stop going to Open School for the Summer - This is a complete reversal of past years when the closing of school in June brought a sign of relief. Now, doing the usual Summer things seem to be a waste to them.

We all hope the Summer of '73 will bring a continuation of Open School - No one needs or wants a vacation from it.